

# BLM seeks private partnerships to reduce fires

by Sarah Miley

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A partnership between an Erda resident and the Bureau of Land Management aims to reduce the potential for natural fuels to burn in the event of wildfire in the Lake Point area.

The 45 acres west of the Union Pacific railroad tracks in Lake Point contain rye grass on BLM land. The corridor for the railroad is a very high fire danger area, because the grass ignites easily and burns quickly, according to Erin Darboven, spokeswoman for the West Desert District of the BLM.

Homes are also located near the grasses, making for a potentially volatile situation.

Travis Shafer, of Erda, will be mowing down the grass and in the spring he will return to cut and bale it for use as feed for horses and cattle. The project is part of a contract with the BLM.

The BLM is hoping Shafer's efforts will prevent catastrophes like the Barrow Pit Fire of 2000, which burned acres of land in the area, threatening homes and communication towers, and causing evacuations.

In addition, this spring Shafer will be doing another similar project on about 200 acres of BLM land in Pine Canyon. The project is at an old dairy site. Last spring, a fire occurred there during a fuels reduction project. This mow will help reduce the amount of fuel in the area to reduce future fires.

Other individuals have done similar projects in Tooele and Pine Canyon where grass is cut, baled and sold, according to Keith Olive, fuels crew member with the West Desert District of the BLM.

Projects like these benefit both the BLM and the private individual, Darboven said.

"It's an alternative to just burning and it's a beneficial relationship that reduces the risk of fire and at the same time gives some stuff to the local residents," she said.

Other BLM projects up for contract in Tooele County include a project on 100 acres at Hill Springs and 55 acres in Ibapah. Hill Springs is part of a much larger project, Olive said, although 100 acres is what's up for contract now. Both projects would involve juniper reduction.

People wanting to find more information on the contracts can contact the BLM.

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A Union Pacific Railroad train heads south near Lake Point Thursday morning with rye grass in the foreground. The corridor for the railroad through this area has a very high fire danger because of the dry grass.

- Photography/Maegan Burr